

A
CATECHISM
on
Slovak Lutherans



By

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ULCA
1958

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PART ONE

HOW THE GOSPEL CAME TO THE SLOVAKS

1. What people inhabit the Central and Eastern regions of Europe?
The Slav nations.
2. Which are the Slav nations?
Russians, Polaks, Czechs, Slovaks, Croatians (Horvaths), Serbs, Bulgarians and Slovines.
3. How many Slovaks are there in the world?
Over 3 million.
4. When does Slovak history start?
That is impossible to ascertain precisely. The first historical references occur in III and IV centuries, A.D.
5. What was the religion of early Slovaks?
Like the Greeks, Romans, Germans and other great tribes, the Slavs and Slovaks had their own form of polytheism (many gods and goddesses).
6. Which were the chief gods of the Slovaks?
Parom, the god of lightning and thunder; Zivena, the goddess of Spring; Morena, the goddess of winter and death; Lada, the goddess of love; Vilias, the spirits of the forest (fairies); Rusalkies, the nymphs of the waters; etc.
7. What was the first Slovak state?
The empire of Samuel (623-58 A.D.).
The great Moravian Empire of the IX century.
8. What was the second Slovak state?
9. Who were the outstanding kings of this empire?
Mojmir, Rastislav, and Svatopluk.
10. Who first began to Christianize the Slovaks?
Catholic priests from Germany.
11. Why did these efforts fail?
Because the German missionaries did not know the Slovak language, (they used Latin and German) and because the Germans did not want to Christianize the Slovaks only but sought also to conquer them by military force.
12. Who reintroduced Christianity to the Slovaks, and when?
King Rastislav in 863 A.D.
13. Who were the missionaries who Christianized the Slovaks?
Cyril and Methodius.
14. Where did Rastislav get the missionaries?
From King Michael III of Constantinople.
15. To which branch of Christianity did these missionaries belong?
To the Eastern or Orthodox Church.
16. What significant work did Cyril and Methodius perform among the Slovaks?
Cyril introduced the old Slovak alphabet, using the Greek forms which is still used by the majority of the Slavs. The brothers then translated the Bible, the Liturgy and other books into the Slovak, using the new alphabet.

In all their work, they used the language of the people and laid the foundations for Slovak literature.

17. How did the German priests look upon this turn of events?

They were jealous of the great success Cyril and Methodius had and did everything to nullify their influence.

18. What charges did the German Catholic priests bring against the Apostles to the Slavs?

They charged before Pope Hadrian II that the brothers were guilty of heresy by introducing a new Liturgy into the church and attempting to organize an independent Slovak Church.

19. What did the pope do about the charges?

He asked Cyril and Methodius to report to him at Rome and answer the charges.

20. What was the outcome of the hearing before the pope?

The brothers were exonerated of heresy; their translation of the Bible and other works was approved; their Slovak priests, who had accompanied them, were reconsecrated to the priesthood; and the Slovak Liturgy was accepted with the stipulation that the Gospel lessons be read in Latin first and then in Slavic.

21. What happened to Cyril shortly after this?

He became ill, retired to a monastery and died shortly after, in 869 A.D.

22. What happened to Methodius?

He was made the archbishop of the first independent Slovak archbishopric.

23. What prevented the development of the Slovak bishopric?

The influence of King Svatopluk, who persecuted Methodius to such an extent that he died in 885, expelled all workers under Eastern Orthodox rites, and finally the control of the church was given into the hands of Rome, over the protest of many faithful souls.

24. What else hampered the development of Slovak Christianity?

The influx of the Magyars (Hungarians) into the ancient lands of the Slavs, including the Slovak branch.

25. What was the final outcome of Slav, especially Slovak, Christianity?

Like other national groups of the Western civilization, Slovak Christians fell into the deep sleep and mental stupor of the Middle (Dark) Ages.

PART TWO

HOW THE REFORMATION INFLUENCED THE SLOVAKS

1. What marks the reawakening of Western civilization?

The Renaissance.

2. What effect did the Renaissance have on the Western Church?

It brought demands for a Reformation from head to toe.

3. Who were the leaders of the reformation movement?

Waldo of Spain, Wycliffe of England, Savonarola of Italy, and Hus of Czechia (Bohemia).

4. What happened to these pre-reformers?

They were persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, and killed by authority of the Roman Catholic Church.

5. How was John Hus killed?

He was burned alive on July 6, 1415, at the gates of the city of Constance.

6. What were some of the principles for which John Hus died?

a. He rejected indulgences and the papacy.

b. He demanded a moral life from the clergy and the laity.

c. He asked that the cup be restored to the people at the administration of the Lord's Supper.

7. What effect did Hus' death have on central Europe?
It initiated the Hussite Wars which lasted about a century.
8. What happened during these wars?
The followers of Hus were defeated and scattered among the Slav nations of Central Europe.
9. What was the consequence of the Hussite dispersion?
The ground was prepared for the Lutheran Reformation of the Sixteenth Century.
10. When and where did the Lutheran Reformation begin?
On October 31, 1517, when Dr. Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on the Castle Church door at Wittenberg.
11. What efforts were made to stop Luther's influence?
Cardinal Cajetan, nobleman Miltitz, and Professor Eck made efforts on behalf of the Roman hierarchy to silence Luther.
12. What was the outcome of these efforts?
They all failed, so Luther was called to the Diet at Worms and asked to recant.
13. What was Luther's stand before the Diet?
He said in substance, "I am bound by the Scriptures — I cannot and will not recant. — Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise; so help me God."
14. What was the sentence pronounced on Luther?
He was declared to be an heretic; his arrest was to be effected within 60 days, and then he was to be executed.
15. Was the verdict ever carried out?
No, Luther lived to be 63 years old and died a natural death.
16. How far did the Lutheran Reformation spread?
To all of Northern Europe: Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Greenland, Iceland and the Baltic states; also east and west throughout Central Europe.
17. How was the Reformation received by the Slovaks?
Since the ground had been prepared by the Hussites, practically all Slovaks turned Lutheran.
18. What is the religious affiliation of Slovaks today?
90% are Catholic and only 10% Lutheran.
19. What brought about this great reversion?
The Catholic counter-reformation.
20. What are the marks of the counter-reformation?
The seizure of educational institutions and the use of armies to force the people into the Catholic fold.
21. How long did the persecution of Slovak Lutherans last?
Over 200 years.
22. What shows the severity of these persecutions?
The fact that by the year 1674, 800 churches were taken from the Slovak Lutherans and given to the Roman Catholic Church and that in 1682, only two Lutheran churches were permitted in any one country.
23. Who were some of the heroes of this period?
Daniel Krman, a school teacher who was condemned to death; Samuel Hruskovic and George Tranovsky who were persecuted and exiled.
24. What was George Tranovsky's chief contribution to Slovak Lutheranism?
He organized the Slovak Hymnal containing over 2,000 hymns and wrote at least 150 of its hymns, while translating many others. This is still the most used hymnbook of the Slovak Lutheran church.
25. When did the Slovak Lutheran Church finally gain its freedom?
After World War I.

PART THREE

SLOVAK LUTHERANS IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

1. What led Slovak Lutherans to emigrate?
Religious persecution and poverty.
2. When did the first Slovak Lutheran reach this country?
Already by 1880.
3. Where were the first Slovak Lutheran Churches organized?
In Streator, Ill.; Freeland, Pa.; and Minneapolis, Minn.
4. When did the first great influx of Slovak Lutherans occur?
At the turn of the 20th Century, between 1890 and 1914.
5. When did the second great wave of emigration come?
After World War I.
6. Where did the Slovak Lutheran emigrants settle?
Along the Northern Atlantic Coast, then in Eastern Pennsylvania (hard coal region) and finally West along the Industrial belt, Great Lakes to Minneapolis.
7. When was the first Slovak Lutheran Synod organized?
On October 2, 1902.
8. With what general body was the Slovak Synod affiliated?
The Missouri Synod, through the Synodical Conference.
9. What happened to the Slovak (Missourian) Synod shortly after organization?
It became rife with controversy, which almost wrecked it.
10. What points were in dispute?
The matter of registering with the pastor before participating in Holy Communion; the stand on fraternal organizations; the use of the proper hymnal — the old "Tranoscius" and the newer "Zpevník;" and the legalistic strictness of the Slovak Synod in general.
11. What was the result of these controversies?
Some congregations left Synod, others refused to join, and still others split over the issues.
12. Where and when was the Slovak Zion Synod organized?
On June 19, 1919, in Braddock, Pa.
13. Why was the Zion Synod organized?
To band together those congregations which left the Slovak (Missourian) Synod and those which were independent as yet.
14. With what general body did the Zion Synod associate itself?
With the United Lutheran Church in America, organized in 1918.
15. Why did the Zion Synod join the ULCA?
Because the General Council, which had merged into the ULCA, had helped out orphaned Slovak Lutheran congregations and organized new ones under the leadership of Dr. A. L. Ramer.
16. When did the Zion Synod join the ULCA?
In 1920.
17. What is the relationship of the Slovak Zion Synod to the ULCA?
It is one of the 32 separate synods composing the ULCA and following its program, yet virtually independent in itself.
18. Who are the present (1958) Executive Officers of the Slovak Zion Synod?
President, the Rev. John Zornan; Secretary, the Rev. John Shintay; Treasurer, the Rev. George Churlik.
19. What are the statistics on the Slovak Zion Synod?
The synod has some 20,000 members, in 49 congregations, served by 36 pastors and five retired pastors. The communicant membership is slightly over 8,000 souls (1958).
20. What general organizations are found in Slovak Zion Synod?
Four: The Sunday School Teachers Conference, the Young Peoples Lu-

theran Association in the Central District and the Young People of the Eastern District, and the United Lutheran Church Women of the Central Conference.

21. What is the chief characteristic of the Slovak Zion Synod?
That it preaches the Gospel in two languages: Slovak and English.
22. What is the theological position of the Slovak Zion Synod?
Conservative orthodoxy, that is, strict adherence to the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions.
23. What is the chief problem of the Slovak Zion Synod?
Transition from the Slovak to English in rites and ceremonies. (No doctrinal differences are involved.)
24. What are the present prospects of the Slovak Zion Synod?
That it will soon disappear from the scene, as congregations and pastors affiliate with the larger general bodies of Lutherans in USA and Canada.
25. What is the eternal hope of the Slovak Zion Synod?
That when its Lord and Master comes to judge the living and the dead, it will be pronounced a "good and faithful servant" of the Lord.

PART FOUR

THE SLOVAK ZION SYNOD

1. What is a synod?
A group of believers bound together for the purpose of doing the Lord's work.
2. Who are the members of Slovak Zion Synod?
Pastors and congregations.
3. How many members does synod have?
41 Pastors and 49 congregations.
4. How is the Synod divided?
Into three districts called conferences: the Eastern, the Central, and the Western.
5. How is the Synod run?
By its Constitution and annual Conventions.
6. What is faith of Synod?
This Synod believes and confesses that the Canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God inspired by the Holy Ghost, the only infallible rule of faith and practice; and that the three general Creeds — the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian — and the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church, namely: the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, the Small and Large Catechism of Luther, and the Formula of Concord are a true exposition and defense of that divine Word, according to which all questions of faith and practice shall be decided.
7. What are the stated objects of Synod?
 1. To maintain and extend the Kingdom of God by the pure preaching of God's Word and the right administration of the Sacraments.
 2. To guard over the pure teaching, practice and church discipline. In case of necessity to decide controversial questions.
 3. To devise and execute wise and scriptural plans for the education of the young, the increase of a godly and efficient ministry, the diffusion of sound literature, the support of the missionary and charitable operations of the Church.
 4. To consecrate (ordain) worthy and sufficiently prepared men into the ministry, to remove, suspend, or depose from office those, who on account of false teaching or a scandalous life have become unworthy. To receive

ministers and congregations into the bond of the Synod, likewise to dismiss them.

5. To cooperate with other synods through the medium of the United Lutheran Church in America in the larger work of the Church.

8. How is the Synod supported?

By the free will offerings of individuals and congregations.

9. How does the Synod support world-wide missions?

Through regular contributions to projects of the ULCA in fields of Foreign Missions, American Missions, Social Missions, educational needs and Lutheran World Action donations.

10. How is the money received by Synod divided?

About 75% is given to the ULCA and 25% is used for synodical purposes.

11. For what special funds is support asked by Synod?

The Student Fund, the Deaconess Fund, and the Home Missions Fund.

12. How is the Student Fund used?

Needy college and seminary students are given aid from the fund. This aid is in the form of a loan. But the loan is cancelled when a student finishes his studies and serves the church for 5 years.

13. How is the Deaconess Fund used?

By giving aid to ladies which wish to go into full-time service. The same rules apply as above.

14. How is the Home Missions Fund used?

To give salary aid to small churches and make emergency loans to pastors.

15. How does the Synod help congregations?

It sends supplies to vacant congregations, helps them to secure pastors, and cooperates with them at special celebrations. In cases of controversy, the Synod tries to settle the dispute in a Christian manner.

16. What literature is regularly published in the Synod?

It publishes its official monthly magazine "THE ZION," the annual almanac "THE ZION CALENDAR," and other pieces of literature.

17. How are the conventions of Synod held?

By invitation of congregations.

18. Who attends a convention?

Pastors and lay delegates from the congregations (one for each pastor).

19. How is the convention divided?

Into the Ministerial Session and the General Convention.

20. How is each Convention begun?

With a Communion Service.

21. What is the highlight of a convention?

The Ordination Service.

22. How are conventions financed?

The host congregation provides meals and quarters. The traveling expenses are pooled and pro-rated so that all congregations have the same bill.

23. When do the Conferences meet?

In the Spring and Fall of each year.

24. What is the purpose of the Conference meetings?

To help achieve the objects of Synod in their own territory.

25. May a pastor or a congregation sever its connection with Synod?

Yes, anytime; but the procedure outlined in the Constitution must be observed.

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